

# NUTRITION

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## Q & A About Vegetables and Fruits

**Q:** Is “five a day” of fruits and vegetables the goal for everyone?

**A:** No. “5 a Day” was selected as a slogan to help promote consumption of these foods. The U.S. Food Guide Pyramid suggests five servings of fruits and vegetables for older and less active people, as well as young children, who consume about 1,600 calories a day. But active women, teenage girls and most men, who consume around 2,200 calories, are advised to aim for seven servings a day. Active men and others with high calorie needs should have nine servings a day. Because vegetables and fruits can help lower the risk of cancer and other health problems, the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) recommends five to ten servings a day.

**Q:** When counting vegetables and fruits, are potatoes a vegetable or a grain?

**A:** A grain. Since they are good sources of vitamin C and potassium, potatoes seem more like vegetables. In the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Guide Pyramid, potatoes are grouped with vegetables. But the carbohydrate and calorie content of potatoes is much higher than for most vegetables. Consequently, people with diabetes are instructed to group potatoes with other high-carbohydrate foods, like bread and pasta, to help them control their blood sugar.

**Q:** Is dried fruit really a “high energy” or “high in calorie” food?

**A:** It is both. Energy in food is measured in calories, just as size is measured in inches or feet. And dried fruit is concentrated in both calories and nutrients. Whether a food is high enough in calories to be “fattening” depends on the total number of calories you consume and burn each day. A standard serving of dried fruit is one-fourth of a cup or a small handful. For people who are very active or have high calorie needs, like children and teens, larger portions are a nutritious way to add concentrated amounts of calories. If you want to fill up with a small amount of calories, fresh fruit is a better choice.

**Q:** Can salsa count as a vegetable serving?

**A:** A half-cup of salsa counts as a vegetable serving just like any mixture of chopped vegetables. Most people think of salsa as a Mexican-style tomato product, but the term actually includes a broad range of chopped fruit and vegetable mixtures, literally meaning “sauce.” Salsas are great for adding delicious flavor to foods while boosting their nutritional value. For example, salsas based on fruits like pineapple, peaches, kiwi or pears are especially good on grilled fish and poultry.



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